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ABSTRACT

Two lectures on the development of Berlin's adult education centers after World War II are included. The lecture by Werner Korthaase begins by describing the situation prior to 1920, when Berlin was divided into independent districts, each with its own administrative authorities. It then describes the reestablishment of the local adult education centers in all the districts in 1945 and the diversity of offerings and student numbers. The lecture concludes with a description of the detrimental effects of the Soviet blockade during 1948-1949. The lecture by Karl Heinz Rose begins by briefly describing the development of Berlin's adult education centers after they were re-established during the summer of 1945. It then discusses the disintegration of the programmatic structure of adult education in Berlin due to the political division of the city, the "Study Group on Workers' Education" founded by the United States military government, the contribution of the Education Branch of the British military government to the easing of the difficult start of Berlin's district adult education centers, and exchange programs with the United States and Great Britain. International cooperation is also highlighted. The paper concludes by focusing on the decline in importance accorded to Berlin's adult education centers and the emphasis on liberal arts programs in the centers. (YLB)

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BERLIN'S ADULT EDUCATION CENTRES (Volkshochschulen) from 1945 to 1960

by Karl Heinz Rose / Werner Korthaase
Berlin/Steglitz Berlin/Neukölln

Federal Republic of Germany

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Lecture by: Werner Korthaase, director VHS Neukölln

To make the situation in Berlin easier to understand, he describes the origins of today's administrative division of Greater Berlin into a central administration for Land Berlin and local district administrations. Berlin is divided into 20 districts. Before 1920 some of Berlin's present districts such as Charlottenburg, Spandau, Steglitz, and Neukölln were not part of Berlin, but were independent cities. In practice, these districts are largely comparable to the independent administrations of other large cities. Each district has top administrative authorities chosen through local elections and a district parliament elected by its citizens, and each district is responsible for its own adult education centre. In 1919 more than 20 adult education centres were created in rapid succession within the area that would later become Greater Berlin. Not all of these were founded by municipal authorities; some were also established by independent sponsors with political or other affiliations. In 1920 order was brought into this rather chaotic situation by an agreement to found an adult education centre for the whole of Berlin. This institution maintained its head office in Central Berlin and had branch offices in some of Berlin's administrative districts, but the number of participants in its courses was insignificant.

In 1945 local adult education centres founded by the districts were created in all districts once again, but this time the situation was fundamentally different. Most traffic routes had been destroyed, and it was necessary to observe the curfews imposed by the Allies. Therefore the adult education centres were only able to work within narrow limits.

Berlin's adult education centres differed greatly with regard to the structure of their adult student bodies, courses offered, number of participants, and the relative percentages of occupational categories they reached. The curricula of the adult education centres in Berlin's outlying districts were not at all comparable with those of the centres in the middle of the city. The percentage of workers attending varied from 70% to as little as 1%. In 1946 the larger adult education centres registered 3,000 to 4,000 adult students, while the smaller ones had only 700 to 800.

In accordance with their new objectives, the adult education centres were supposed to attract as many workers as possible to their courses. As early as the end of 1945, in-company adult education centres were founded that were not part of the district centres. However, only the adult education centre of Berlin's transport company, the "BVG", ever achieved genuine significance.

Further education for the instructors was organized by the adult education division of the Municipal Board for Greater Berlin and was under communist direction. During 1948/1949 a Soviet blockade cut off the western part of Berlin from the zones occupied by the Western allies. The Western occupying powers could not accept instructor education run by the communists. During the blockade the United States tried to continue its work to the greatest extent possible, but the number of participants dropped considerably. After the blockade, work continued under very difficult conditions; West Berlin was faced by major financial problems, because the most essential items and facilities were not available. Budgets for adult education dwindled.

Part II

Lecture by: Karl Heinz Rose, director of the Steglitz Adult Education Centre

Topic: Berlin's Adult Education Centres from 1949 to 1960

Karl Heinz Rose, director of the adult education centre for Berlin's district of Steglitz, attended adult education courses there beginning in 1946 and served as an instructor starting in 1951. Both research findings and his own experiences are integrated in his report. He begins by briefly describing the development of Berlin's adult education centres after they were re-established during the summer of 1945, using a table to sketch this development.

The programmatic structure of adult education in Berlin disintegrated due to the political division of the city in November of 1948. After the split, 12 of the district adult education centres continued to adhere to the "classical system", while the 8 centres in the Soviet sector had to conform to the ideological prescriptions of the Socialist Unity Party. As was the case in most of the Federal Republic of Germany, from 1950 to 1958 worker-oriented programmes, strongly supported by the co-operation of "Arbeit und Leben" with the district adult education centres, played a prominent role.

In 1950 the U.S. military government founded a "Study Group on Workers' Education", which investigated the reasons why workers - analogous to the classic sociological definition - only represented about 10% of the students in adult education courses in 1950. The two representatives of the Education Branch of the British military government, Mr. Trevor Davies and Ronald Wilson (later in Manchester), along with Dr. Charles Corcelle, contributed decisively to easing the difficult start of Berlin's district adult education centres after the last war by offering advice on educational

matters and material assistance, and also by practising a style of partnership unusual for the victors at the time. After 1948 exchange programmes initiated by respective military governments for German adult educators in Great Britain and the United States proved to be especially helpful. In some cases this co-operation in the area of personnel and the friendships that resulted have continued up to the present.

The International Conference on Workers' Education held in the 'Leuschner-Haus' (the former private villa of Nazi foreign minister J. v. Ribbentrop), as well as the many other weekend seminars held there until the end of the 1950s, represented a high point of this early co-operation. The 'Leuschner-Haus' was somewhat like a residential centre for adult education during the first years after the war. Such important personalities as Dr. Heinz Gutsche, Dr. Walter Heynen, Professor Robert Havemann, the highly respected Dr. Jean Hartmann, Helene Jung, Professor Kurt Landsberg - later president of the parliament of Land Berlin, Annedore Leber, Ernst Niekisch, Gustav Pietsch, Professor Werner Stein, Professor Otto Suhr - later Governing Mayor of Berlin, and many others were among the instructors. Around 1950 about 35,000 adults attended courses at the 12 district adult education centres in West Berlin, taught by 800 part-time adult education teachers. The fee for a 90-minute instructional period rose from DM 0.30 in 1950 to DM 0.50 in 1956. On the average the adult education teachers received DM 3.00 for each 90-minute period taught.

Unlike the adult education centres of Vienna, Berlin's centres do not have their own buildings, even though the Berlin Senate has been promising them such facilities since 1951. The Steglitz and Reinickendorf districts do have parts of buildings at their disposal, however. On the whole the importance accorded to Berlin's adult education centres in the area of cultural policy declined after 1950, due to the Cold War and the limited sensitivity of the Social Democratic government in Berlin to the role of adult education centres in educational policy. For example, during the course of competition with East Berlin, the new Free University, the 'Deutsche Oper' opera house, and the Berlin Philharmonic were accorded priority, both in financial terms and from a political point of view. The GDR as a socialist state also had similar priorities.

The respective political image of Berlin was more important to the two Germanies than promoting adult education in Berlin as a top priority! The rapid development of new programme structures and transition to full-time academic staff that occurred in West German adult education centres were lacking in Berlin for the most part. However, this did have significant advantages for Berlin as well:

The very free and independent "classical" adult education system that had originated in Denmark and the Weimar Republic was preserved for the most part. The adult education centres of the individual districts do not co-operate as closely; autonomy is prized. Examinations, certificates, and school-like structures have not been characteristic of Berlin's adult education centres, but rather liberal arts programmes and, since 1970, an increasing number of basic cultural courses, workshops, and women's programmes. The adult education centres have continued to lag behind with regard to financial resources and staffing, however!

In Berlin a certain amount of idealism is still necessary for anyone committed to adult education centres.